

In Jesus Humanity and Divinity United

Domenic Marbaniang

In beginning to write this article, I dare to add another string to a theme in the exposition of which, wrote Muggeridge, “literally billions of words, oceans of paint, acres of canvas, mountains of stone and marble, have been expended, not to mention, in recent times, miles of film” [*Jesus Rediscovered*]. But, it is a theme well deserved. Saints and sinners, critics and divines, princes and subjects, all have marveled at the magnificence of this event called the Incarnation of the Son of God, in which divinity united with humanity. It baffles human imagination to think that God would descend to the state of a human. The Bible calls it the mystery of godliness (1Tim.3:16). Sacred in its very essence, it is the story of the love of the King of the Universe, a story so sacred that the colonnades of Romance tremble in disbelief.

That glorious Form, that Light unsufferable,
And that far-beaming blaze of Majesty,
Wherewith he went at Heav’n’s high council-table,
To sit the midst of Trinal Unity,
He laid aside, and here with us to be,
Forsook the courts of everlasting day,
And chose with us a darksome house of mortal clay.
[John Milton, *On the Morning of Christ’s Nativity*]

To the Apostle John it defined the essence and foundations of Christian ethics: “In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him... Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another” (1Jn 4:9, 11). For, if one but looks at human society and where we have faltered and then, at the Divine Community (the Trinity) and see how it stands, one wouldn’t fail to perceive the brokenness of our kind that He came to heal with the love that binds heaven: “that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us.... that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them” (Jn. 17:21, 26). And, He did that when He stepped into the skin of man, when the glory of infinite resplendence got wrapped into the frail flesh of a babe, and immortality encased itself in a mortal frame. Once and for all, the divine and human elements united, inseparably, yet without any admixture in the birth of the Son of Man.

Now, this truth is so sublime that history has bred several misconceptions, as well, in an attempt to fathom it. The misunderstandings must be cleared before we can proceed on to grasp what significance the manifestation of God in flesh has for us.

Clearing Misunderstandings

1. Christ’s Humanity is not at the Expense of His Divinity, nor Vice Versa. To many of us this is, by fact of the matter, the truth. But, there are some cults, for instance, the Christadelphians, who deny the divinity of Christ and claim that Christ’s life began in the womb of Mary. There are others, meanwhile, like the modern day Jehovah Witnesses for instance, who think that Jesus’ life began a long time before His incarnation (a position similar to the one held by a bishop called Arius, whose heresy was condemned at the Council of Nicaea in AD 325). The Bible, however, very specifically

teaches us that Christ's life is without any beginning or end (Heb.7:3). He is eternal, and therefore is called the Son of God. Alexander of Constantinople (ca. 244-337) was right when he said that the Fatherhood of the Father is eternal, likewise the Sonship of the Son is eternal as well; therefore, Christ has eternally been the Son of God.

There have been others, besides, like the Adoptionists, for instance, who taught that Jesus was adopted at His baptism and thence became the Son of God. The Docetists taught that the humanity of Jesus was a mere illusion and the Monophysitists believed that Christ had only one nature, His humanity being swallowed up by His divinity. Of the Monophysit group, the Eutychianists believed that the humanity and divinity of Christ were fused to produce a single nature. Contrary to all these heretical views, the Bible clearly reveals Christ as fully human and fully divine; both the divine and human natures being united in His person without any confusion or mixture of any kind (Col.2:9).

2. Misunderstandings in Islam. There is another misunderstanding, especially among our Muslim friends, that we teach Jesus to be the Son of God in the sense that He was conceived by Mary through some kind of union with God. That would be incorrect from the Biblical point of view as well. For, the Scripture clearly states that the conception of Jesus in Mary's womb was by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit (Lk.1:35). Jesus was not produced. He incarnated. Various ancient mythologies falsely talk of their gods coming and cohabiting with women to produce semi-divine offspring. Such myths are both false and unbiblical. The Incarnation was not so. For, in it the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, God the Son Himself, took on the form of man (Phil.2:6,7). Jesus was not a third element produced from the fusion of the divine and the human. There was no mixture of natures. He was fully God and fully man. The Incarnation did not make Christ the Son of God. He was eternally the Son of God. In the Incarnation, He assumed human nature and became the Son of Man. Through the Virgin Mary He became the Seed of the woman that would finally crush the head of Satan (Gen.3:15; Gal.4:4).

3. Essential Differences between Christ's Incarnation and the *Avatars*. The four main differences between the *avatara* and the Incarnation relate to the nature, duration, mission, and instances of the two concepts. In its nature, the mythological *avatara* is not completely the form that it assumes; but in the Incarnation, Christ became fully human; not merely in appearance but in essence and reality. Also, the duration of the *avatara* is limited, after which it returns to its original form; however, in the Incarnation Christ became permanently human; He continues to be the Son of Man, our High Priest in heaven and the Glorious King who will one day return to reign from David's throne. Next, the mission of the *avatara* is conceived to be the destruction of evil forces or personalities; on the contrary, the mission of the Son of Man was to seek and save them that were lost – a propitiatory mission that meant His ultimate sacrifice on the Cross. Finally, the *avatara* is said to repeat for at least ten instances to put an end to evil. But, the Incarnation of Christ was once for all. It was final. There cannot and need not be a second Incarnation; for He already is Man forever and He has finished His propitiatory mission on earth (Heb.9:26,28; 10:10-14).

God in Flesh for Us

Apart from the facts that we have noted regarding the Incarnation as being real (not mere appearance), complete (not partial), permanent, propitiatory, and final, there are some important truths that the Bible wishes us to know.

1. The *Logos* of Fellowship. As the Incarnate Word (Logos), Christ stands as the Reason and Logic of our acceptance into the family of God. In the Incarnation, Christ partook of human nature, so that through Him we might become partakers of the divine nature and experience the glorious liberty of the children of God (Heb.2:14; Rom.8:15-17,21,23). Paul mentions that Jesus was made in the likeness of men (Phil.2:7) and John records that He was made flesh (Jn.1:14), both using the same Greek word *ginomai* for “made”, asserting the realness of His humanity. This doesn’t imply that there was any change in His divinity. That could never be; for, God is beyond change – He is immutable. But, since “the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Heb.2:14-15; cf. Col.1:13).

He became one of us so that we, through Him, might become His forever. Therefore, all that have received Him have received the right to be called the children of God (Jn.1:12). He partook of human nature, so that we might have the right to partake of the divine nature (2Pet.1:4; Rev.2:7) by becoming partakers of that one Bread who came for our salvation (1Cor. 10:17; Jn.6:51), who through His death offered Himself for us an eternal peace offering so that we can be accepted into His divine fellowship by partaking of His Body (Jn. 6:51, 54-56; Matt.26:26; Deut.27:7; Lev.7:15). Unlike the sacrifices of the Old Testament, the Sacrifice of Jesus needs no repetition, for He lives forever, as the Reason of our acceptability. The Lamb that was slain lives (Rev.5:6). Those who partake of Him will never hunger again; He is the Bread of Life. Now, the promise of a blessed resurrection and a glorious eternity remains for all those who have accepted Him; because, through death He has abolished death and has brought life and immortality to light through His Gospel (1Cor.15:44,52,53; Heb.4:1; 2Tim.1:10).

2. The *Logos* of New Creation. Also, in the Incarnation, Christ did not just become a man; He became the Last Adam and the Second Man. He put an end to the old and began the new. Therefore, He says “Behold, I make all things new” (Rev.21:5). He bore the earthly image, so that we might bear His heavenly one (1Cor. 15:49, 45,47).

Both the titles, “Last Adam” and “Second Man” refer to His role as the Seed of the woman. His heel was truly bruised when on the Cross He bled and died for the sins of sinful Adamic race. He took upon Him the guilt of the old world and met death face to face. The Seed fell to the ground; sin was destroyed (Rom.8:3) - the world was wrapped in silence and darkness. Then, He arose. The Seed sprouted and He arose as a New Man, the Second Man, and the Beginner of a new race that was born not of the will of flesh, but was born of God. Natural did the Seed die, but Spiritual did He arise; for the Seed was not merely Adamic, the Seed was the Eternal Son of God. Death could not vanquish Him, nor could the grave hold Him forever; for, He offered Himself once for all by the Eternal Spirit (Heb.9:14), dealing an irreparable death-blow to death itself. What mortal could qualify for such a sacrifice? For man must first pay for his own transgressions and burn for it eternally in the angry flames of hell, before he could do it for others; and, even if he were to suffer for other men, besides, the punishment would only be everlasting, with no hope of a resurrection. But, the Eternal One took upon Himself our eternal punishment and infinitely suffered it in time. Thus, by death He defeated the devil that had power over death; He crushed the head of the serpent and brought to naught the kingdom of darkness. By His resurrection, He obtained for us justification, redemption, adoption, and newness of life, so that we are now accepted before the Father in the Beloved. As the Second Man, He became the author of our faith and salvation, the

Head of the Body which is His Church. (See Gen.3:15; Heb.2:14,15; 1Cor.15:20-23, 44-49, 55; Jn.12:24; 1:12-13; Eph.2:15; Rom.4:25; 8:3-4,10-11; 6:3-10; Heb.5:9; 12:2; Eph.1:4,22; Col.1:18).

The prophets of the Old Testament looked forward with anticipation to this day; but, God has given us the grace to be born in the Sunrise of His Love. We live in *Anno Domini*, the Year of our Lord. Let's live our days for Christ our King!